

101
simple & thoughtful
ways to ✨
**give this
Christmas
away**

M A T T H E W W E S T



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

to

from

*May this little book bring you joy . . .
and the inspiration to give this Christmas away . . .
this holiday season and all year long.*

“GIVE THIS CHRISTMAS AWAY”

What if I told you, you have the power
To give someone hope far beyond their wildest dreams.
What if I told you, it's right there in your hands, in your hands.
It's hard to imagine how something so small
Could make all the difference, tear down the tallest wall.
What if December looked different this year?

*What if we all just give this Christmas away
If there's love in your heart, don't let it stay there.
Give this Christmas away
And your life will be changed by the gift you receive,
When you give this Christmas away.*

It's feeding the hungry, serving the poor,
It's telling the orphan, You're not forgotten anymore.
It's doing what love does even when no one's watching you.
For God so loved the world that He gave us all His Son,
So we could be his hands, his feet, his love . . . his love.

*What if we all just give this Christmas away
If there's love in your heart, don't let it stay there.
Give this Christmas away
And your life will be changed by the gift you receive,
When you give this Christmas away.*

INTRODUCTION

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LIST

I still make a list. Been doing it since I was a kid. Around Thanksgiving I begin making my Christmas wish list in the hopes that there will be no surprises waiting for me under the tree. Let's be honest: no one wants to say on Christmas morning, "Oh, this is great! I've always wanted a Chia Pet." Like I said, no surprises. These days I hand the list to my wife and drop hints to the rest of my family (complete with Web addresses for purchasing the gifts). After all, the key to making a Christmas wish list foolproof is eliminating the guesswork.

My list usually consists of some things I need but mostly stuff that I want and never got around to buying. Regardless, every year all the items have one common thread: it's all about me. I'm pretty certain I'm not the only list-carrying member of the "ME club" at Christmastime. Each year, after receiving all the things on my list, I find myself coming to the same conclusion: the things we are convinced will satisfy the longings deep within us only leave us wanting more.

Recently I was asked to write a song for the end credits of the VeggieTales Christmas movie *Saint Nicholas - A Story of Joyful Giving*. This movie's message is clear: true joy can be found at Christmas when we give. And we can give because God has given so much to us. To further help spread that message, VeggieTales has teamed up with Operation Christmas Child (OCC), a project started by Franklin Graham that shows how to give big. As the 2008

spokesperson for OCC, I am proud to say that across the country we collected over eight million shoe boxes filled with toys and other items—gifts for children around the world who would not have had a Christmas otherwise.

The song “Give This Christmas Away” was inspired by the VeggieTales movie and the work of OCC. Throughout the songwriting process, I kept circling around the line “What if December looked different this year?” My hope was to write more than a catchy tune. I wanted to create something that could shift our gift-giving attitudes this Christmas by challenging us to think of the needs of others. This is where the book *Give This Christmas Away* comes in. It not only encourages you to give but also provides you with a list of creative and unique ways to do it. It’s a different kind of Christmas list.

In addition, we have created a Web site—www.givethischristmasaway.com—where you can add to this giving list by sharing the different ways you have found to give to others. We’ve also posted links on the Web site to organizations that we feel capture what the spirit of giving looks like. Check out the organizations and see how you can get involved. My hope is that the spirit of giving will be found not only at Christmas but each and every day of the year. It’s a small way of giving thanks for the most precious gift that humanity has ever received—Jesus Christ, our Immanuel, God with us: “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16). Christmas celebrates God’s gift to each one of us. Will you help make December look different this year?

—Matthew West

❄️ 1 ❄️

Take a second look at that old shoe box.

Who would have thought a shoe box could bring so much joy? Operation Christmas Child (OCC) has found a way for shoe boxes to change the lives of countless children all across the world. Last year I had the honor of being a spokesman for their amazing cause. And together, we collected over eight million shoe boxes filled with things like toys, toothbrushes, and school supplies. Operation Christmas Child delivers those gifts to children who would otherwise have no Christmas. A shoe box filled in Chicago could end up reaching a child in Russia. On a recent trip to Bogotá, Colombia, I witnessed firsthand the far-reaching impact of OCC and the power of something as small as a shoe box. The children who received these boxes were smiling from ear to ear, as if they'd just been given the gift of hope. In a way, that's exactly what they had been given.

Join Operation Christmas Child this year in their effort to bring Christmas to millions of children. In addition to receiving your gift, each child is also given a special message about the greatest gift of all, the love of Christ. So by simply packing a shoe box, you are opening up a door to change a child's life for eternity. For parents, this is an effective way to begin teaching your children what Christmas is all about.

Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

ISAIAH 1:17

**Hold the door.**

It's a battlefield out there. Sure there may be some sappy elevator music version of "Silver Bells" playing throughout the five-level department store, but don't let it fool you. The shopping malls at Christmas can be downright war zones, and it's every man for himself. (That's why when my wife forces me to go with her to the mall I usually camp out at the food court.) I suggest we change our tactics—show some kindness this Christmas by being aware of the little things. See the woman with three kids in tow walking into the store behind you? Stop and hold the door open for her and her small troop.

This kind of thoughtfulness can be contagious. There's a good chance that woman will extend the favor to someone else somewhere down the line. If you're in a hurry, this will be a good way to slow yourself down. And even if that woman you were courteous to grabs the very last Elmo Live! before you do, the world's not going to come to an end. Can I get an Amen?

The seeds of good deeds become a tree of life.

PROVERBS 11:30



3

Give thanks.

This Christmas, try practicing a continual attitude of thankfulness. Just as the words of the old hymn say, “Count your blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings, see what God hath done.” Write them down if you need to. I think you’ll see that none of us have a shortage of things to be thankful for.

In fact, I believe we are called to be thankful for our problems, too. This is a lesson I have learned firsthand over the years, and I have experienced the transformation that takes place when my perspective on a problem shifts from troubled to thankful. As you give thanks even for your problems, you are saying to everyone around you, “God is at work in the midst of my difficulties and obstacles.” I know it sounds crazy. I mean, who in his or her right mind thanks God for the loss of a job? Imagine someone praying, *Thanks, God, for this illness that has taken away all of my strength.* It sounds unnatural, doesn’t it? If you find yourself facing a trial this Christmas, thank God for your problems. Thank him for the promise that he will “never leave you nor forsake you.” Thank him in advance for what he will do in your life and in the lives of others through this difficulty.

Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done.

COLOSSIANS 2:7 (TLB)

4

Write a letter.

I should have written that letter. My grandmother's health was fading, and I knew she wouldn't be here on earth much longer. Many times it had crossed my mind to write and tell her how much she meant to me. She had written so many encouraging notes to me. But I would get caught up in something and another day would go by with my feelings untold. Then on New Year's Day 2009 we received the phone call that Grandma West had gone to be with the Lord. Immediately my heart sank. *The letter. I never wrote that letter.* Nearly a year later, I still regret not getting it done; I always will.

Can you think of someone you know who deserves to hear just how much they mean to you? Don't wait until it's too late. When it comes to mind, drop whatever you're doing. And forget e-mail. Turn off your cell phone. A text message doesn't cut it. Go old school on this one. Pick up a pen and paper. I don't care if your handwriting looks like chicken scratch. Write a letter this Christmas to someone you love, to someone you respect. The recipient will cherish that letter always, just like I cherish the letters my grandmother wrote to me.

The words of the godly are a life-giving fountain.

PROVERBS 10:11

Hit a home run this Christmas.

Albert Pujols is considered by many to be Major League Baseball's best player. The St. Louis Cardinals first baseman was Rookie of the Year in 2001, MVP two times, and a World Series champion. In the world of sports, Albert is larger than life. But he knows some things are more important than baseball. Albert and his wife, Deidre, started the Pujols Family Foundation in 2005. The foundation helps those affected by Down syndrome in the United States and improves the lives of thousands of impoverished people in the Dominican Republic. (Visit www.pujolsfamilyfoundation.org to find out more about Albert's ministry.) You see, Albert isn't content hitting home runs only on the field. He knows God has a plan to use his platform for a greater purpose.

You can hit a home run this Christmas by using the platform God has given you as a platform for giving. We all have a sphere of influence. Sure, most of us won't have the eyes of the whole world on us, but our family is watching. Friends at school are watching. Coworkers are watching. Make sure that this Christmas they see someone determined to give big. I'm giving you a hundred ideas on how to do it! Knock one out of the park just like Albert.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse. . . . I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in!

MALACHI 3:10



❄️ 6 ❄️

Say Merry Christmas to a complete stranger.

**DON'T SAVE YOUR CHRISTMAS CHEER
FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY ONLY.**

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: joy.

GALATIANS 5:22



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew West is a Sparrow Records recording artist and an accomplished songwriter who has released three albums since 2002. His latest hit song, “The Motions,” stayed on top of Christian radio charts for months in 2009. Matthew has also penned songs for many of today’s top Christian and country artists including Rascal Flatts, Billy Ray Cyrus, Natalie Grant, Mark Schultz, and Point of Grace. Among his achievements are two ASCAP Song of the Year awards. He has also been a columnist for *CCM* magazine. Matthew tours nationally, performing 100+ shows per year. He and his wife, Emily, make their home in Franklin, Tennessee, with their two daughters, Lulu and Delaney, and their dog, Earl “The Girl.” Visit him online at

www.matthewwest.com